

***Amendments to the Claims***

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Previously Presented) A file security system for restricting access to electronic files, said file security system comprising:

a key store configured to store a plurality of cryptographic key pairs, each of the cryptographic key pairs including a public key and a private key, at least one of the cryptographic key pairs pertaining to a predetermined time; and

an access manager, operatively connected to said key store, configured to determine whether the private key of at least one of the cryptographic key pairs pertaining to the predetermined time is permitted to be provided to a requestor based on a current time,

wherein the requestor requires the private key pertaining to the predetermined time to access an encrypted document key in a header of a secured electronic file, a data portion of which was previously secured using the document key, and wherein the header includes the document key and access rules for the secured electronic file, the access rules for further protecting the document key, and wherein the document key was previously encrypted by the public key of the at least one of the cryptographic key pairs pertaining to the predetermined time.

2. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 1, wherein said access manager is configured to provide the private key of the at least one of the cryptographic key pairs pertaining to the predetermined time to the requestor if the predetermined time is less than or equal to the current time.

3. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 1, wherein the requestor is a client module that operatively connects to said access manager over a network.

4. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 1, wherein said file security system further comprises:

at least one client module configured to select the predetermined time and secure the electronic file using the public key of the at least one of the cryptographic key pairs pertaining to the predetermined time so as to provide a time-based access restriction to the electronic file.

5. (Previously Presented) The file security system as recited in claim 4, wherein said client module is further configured to unsecure the secured electronic file by acquiring the private key of the at least one of the cryptographic key pairs pertaining to the predetermined time from said key store, and then unsecure the secured electronic file using the private key pertaining to the predetermined time.

6. (Previously Presented) A method for restricting access to an electronic document, said method comprising:

identifying an electronic document to be secured, the electronic document having at least a data portion that contains data, and a header portion that contains access rules for the electronic document;

determining whether a time-based access key is already available for a predetermined time, otherwise generating a time-based access key for the predetermined time;

securing the data portion of the electronic document through use of a document key to produce a secured electronic document;

storing the document key in the header portion of the electronic document, wherein the access rules are provided for further protecting the document key;

securing the header portion of the electronic document through the use of the time-based access key; and

storing the secured electronic document.

7. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 6, wherein the time-based access key has an access time associated therewith.

8. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 7, further comprising:

storing the time-based access key at a remote key store, wherein the time-based access key is subsequently retrievable from the remote key store when the current time is equal to or greater than the access time associated with the time-based access key.

9. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 8, wherein said method is performed on a client machine that operatively receives the time-based access key from the remote key store over a network.

10. (Previously Presented) A method for restricting access to an electronic document, said method comprising:

identifying an electronic document to be secured, the electronic document having at least a data portion that contains data, and a header portion that contains access rules for the electronic document;

obtaining a document key;

encrypting the data portion of the electronic document using the document key to produce an encrypted data portion;

obtaining a time-based access key;

encrypting the document key using the time-based access key to produce an encrypted document key;

storing the encrypted document key in the header portion;

protecting the document key using the access rules;

forming a secured electronic document from at least the encrypted data portion and the header; and

storing the secured electronic document.

11. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 10, wherein the time-based access key is a public time-based access key.

12. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 10, wherein the time-based access key has an access time associated therewith.

13. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 12, wherein the time-based access key is available from a remote key store when the current time is equal to or greater than the access time associated with the time-based access key.

14. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 13, wherein the access time is a day of a year, and the time-based access key is unique for each day of the year.

15. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 13, wherein said method is performed on a client machine that operatively receives the time-based access key from the remote key store over a network.

16. (Previously Presented) A method for accessing a secured electronic document by a requester, the secured electronic document having at least a header portion, having an encrypted document key and access rules, and an encrypted data portion, said method comprising:

obtaining a time-based access key;

decrypting the document key using the time-based access key, subject to protection by the access rules;

decrypting the encrypted data portion of the secured electronic document using the document key to produce a non-encrypted data portion; and

supplying the non-encrypted data portion to the requestor.

17. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 16, wherein the time-based access key is identified by an indicator within a header portion of the secured electronic document.

18. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 16, wherein the time-based access key is a private time-based access key.

19. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 18, wherein the time-based access key is acquired from a server.

20. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 16, wherein said obtaining of the time-based access key is dependent on the current time.

21. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 16, wherein the time-based access key is associated with an access time, and wherein said obtaining of the time-based access key is permitted when the current time is greater than or equal to the access time.

22. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 21, wherein, if permitted, during said obtaining step the time-based access key is obtained from a server.

23-25. (Cancelled)

26. (Previously Presented) A tangible computer-readable medium having instructions stored thereon, the instructions comprising:

computer program code for identifying an electronic document to be secured, the electronic document having at least a data portion that contains data, and a header portion that contains access rules for the electronic document;

computer program code for determining whether a time-based access key is already available for a predetermined time, otherwise generating a time-based access key for the predetermined time;

computer program code for securing the data portion of the electronic document through use of a document key to produce a secured electronic document;

computer program code for storing the document key in the header portion of the electronic document;

computer program code for protecting the document key using the access rules;

computer program code for securing the header portion of the electronic document through the use of the time-based access key; and

computer program code for storing the secured electronic document.

27. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium as recited in claim 26, wherein the time-based access key has an access time associated therewith.

28. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium as recited in claim 27, wherein said computer readable medium further comprises:

computer program code for storing the time-based access key at a remote key store, and

wherein the time-based access key is subsequently retrievable from the remote key store when the current time is greater than or equal to the access time associated with the time-based access key.

29. (Previously Presented) A tangible computer-readable medium having stored thereon computer-executable instructions that, if executed by a computing device, cause the computing device to perform a method comprising:

identifying an electronic document to be secured, the electronic document having at least a data portion that contains data, and a header portion that contains access rules for the electronic document;

determining whether a time-based access key is already available for a predetermined time, otherwise generating a time-based access key for the predetermined time;

securing the data portion of the electronic document through use of a document key to produce a secured electronic document;

storing the document key in the header portion of the electronic document;

protecting the document key using the access rules;

securing the header portion of the electronic document through the use of the time-based access key; and

storing the secured electronic document.



30. (Previously Presented) A tangible computer-readable medium having stored thereon computer-executable instructions that, if executed by a computing device, cause the computing device to perform a method comprising:

identify an electronic document to be secured, the electronic document having at least a data portion that contains data, and a header portion that contains access rules for the electronic document;

obtain a document key;

encrypt the data portion of the electronic document using the document key to produce an encrypted data portion;

obtain a time-based access key;

encrypt the document key using the time-based access key to produce an encrypted document key;

store the encrypted document key in the header portion;

protect the document key using the access rules;

form a secured electronic document from at least the encrypted data portion and the encrypted header; and

store the secured electronic document.

31. (Previously Presented) A tangible computer-readable medium having stored thereon computer-executable instructions that, if executed by a computing device, cause the computing device to perform a method comprising:

obtain a time-based access key;

decrypt a document key in a header portion using the time-based access key, subject to protection by access rules in the header portion;

decrypt an encrypted data portion of the secured electronic document using the document key to produce a data portion; and  
supply the data portion to the requestor.